
“OUR GREATEST MATERIAL HERITAGE”

THE LIBRARY

1946 - 1966

GERTRUDE L. ANNAN

Librarian, The New York Academy of Medicine
New York, N. Y.

IN these words Dr. Craig referred to the Library in 1956: “It is my conviction that regardless of demand or operational problems or cost or competition, the Library, as our greatest material heritage and treasure, must be maintained at full strength and full effectiveness.” Such a view expressed by the Director of the Academy assured the vigorous support necessary to maintain the Library during his administration, a period critical in the survival of medical society libraries and in the burgeoning demands of the scientific community.

When Dr. Craig assumed office in late 1946 on the eve of the Academy’s centenary, the Library had been under the skilled and scholarly direction of Dr. Archibald Malloch for more than 20 years. Under his guidance the Library moved from dingy quarters in the old building to the magnificence of the new, and was transformed from a poorly staffed collection to a departmentalized modern library operation with a well-trained corps of librarians. Dr. Malloch’s illness in 1948 led to his resignation in 1949, and his place was taken by Janet Doe, who had long served with distinction as Assistant Librarian. Her high purposes are clearly reflected in the annual report of 1950, and deserve a wide audience in 1966 as well. “The possession of an outstanding accumulation of the scientific literature brings with it a certain moral obligation to see that its resources are accessible to all who need them. It has extended its general services as far as seems justifiable on a free basis; it has developed various special services, most of them free, but some unavoidably on a paid non-profit basis. Further, it has believed wholeheartedly in the practice of mutual help among libraries as the surest way to advance the interests of all. By assistance to and from each other, the ability of all libraries to give better service has been increased.”

SERVICES

In this same report is an account of a survey made of the collection and the effectiveness of its services. It is of particular interest to read that: "Its lending services are, and are intended to be, of minor importance, being restricted to Fellows, Subscribers, and non-profit libraries outside New York City; its prime function is the provision of literature for reference within its walls where readers who come there can reasonably expect to find it." Yet such was the dramatic change in the use of the Library that in only 2 years the annual report indicates a new trend already revolutionizing the functions of the Library. In the Library report for 1951-1952, we find that "The great expansion of our photoduplication work in recent years has made much more correspondence necessary. The output of photostats is sevenfold what it was in 1931, entailing, in addition to seven times the labor of mechanical reproduction, seven times as much work by the reference assistants in getting out the material and in identifying the incorrect references. This large increase is undoubtedly one of the explanations for the fewer number of readers today: an article is now read in photostat or microfilm at the office or laboratory instead of our reading-rooms and perhaps by a number of individuals. . . . Another cause of fewer readers has been the tenfold increase in the number of library subscribers: 22 in 1931 have become 244 in 1951. Many of these send messengers to borrow books instead of coming in person, and thus no reader registers. Further, the much greater number of telephone calls probably means that inquirers have found it simpler and quicker to get their information that way."

Another reason cited was the improvement in the smaller medical libraries. "This does not mean that the need for the Academy's resources is lessening; rather it indicates a change in emphasis. A constantly higher proportion of out-of-the-way material is sought here."

This new trend, however, had more significance than was realized, for it represented a change in library use that would intensify in the years ahead. Photocopy requests have more than tripled; interlibrary loans have soared nearly 10 times. The busy physician and scientist prefers to have the literature brought to him in his office, hospital, school, or laboratory. Improvement in the smaller libraries has brought more requests for the literature, not less, and funds available for research and education have meant the establishment of many new libraries with the resultant increase in demands upon the resources of the established ones.

Funds pouring into these facilities have rarely provided enough for library support, and the strain is felt in all our institutions. Telephone requests, too, reflect the need for time-saving methods, and they emphasize the use of the Library staff in serving those not coming in person. Furthermore, teletype and telefacsimile systems will soon greatly facilitate and increase the transmission of our materials. In 1964 interlibrary loans went from here to 40 states and Canada, with the heaviest use in New York State, where a total of 7,460 items were sent to other libraries. New Jersey was second with 2,234. During the same year photocopy of our texts went to 39 states and 22 foreign countries. It is of interest to note that 70 per cent of the loans went to hospitals and medical schools, but the greatest users of photocopy were commercial firms, accounting for 62 per cent.

The readers who now come to the Library represent a changing order, too. In 1947 the largest group, 44 per cent, were physicians who were not Fellows. Today this figure has dropped to 17 per cent, explaining somewhat the increase in lending to other libraries. Happily, the percentage of Fellows has risen from a low 6 per cent in 1947 to 13 in 1963, with an additional 7 per cent of Fellows' representatives. A major increase has been in student use, students other than medical, nursing, or dental advancing from 7 to 21.5. As these young people will be the scientists of tomorrow, the Library's responsibility to the community covers all phases, and contributes substantially to education in both science and medicine, as well as to research and industry. The emphasis is service to this area, but through interlibrary loans and photocopy, its resources are shared with libraries throughout this country.

One service discontinued in this period was the Bibliographical Department, which for a fee compiled bibliographies, made translations from various languages, performed editorial chores, and carried on a current awareness service, citing each month references to articles on specified subjects appearing in the literature. Originally planned for the purpose of supplying Fellows and other physicians with services not elsewhere available, the department had become almost entirely a service for representatives of commercial firms, who could easily find freelance workers expert in filling these needs. It seemed prudent to abolish the department and maintain a file with names of translators, bibliographers, editorial assistants, typists, and others skilled in preparing manuscripts for publication, so that any required help could be obtained.

For a time the current references service continued, but the obvious handicap of delaying current foreign journals from reaching the shelves for our readers' use led to its discontinuation in 1957. Today commercial firms use data-processing techniques for extremely effective current awareness programs of their own.

BUILDING FACILITIES

The Academy does not want a static library, but the frightening proliferation of publications has caused acute and painful space problems for all dynamic collections. In 1953 several additions were made to the Library to ease the situation. A balcony built in the Current Periodicals' Reading Room was designed to fit well into the decor and provide desperately required working space for the staff of that department. Stacks were installed on five floors at the eastern end of the building, formerly used for the museum and other purposes. One floor was also made available for Library staff requirements. Of the five stack floors, one with a locked grill has meant that the Rare Book Room's overflowing additions could be safely housed. During the building of the area the staff worked hard in the old stacks, segregating the 18th-century volumes for the Rare Book Room's collection, the 19th-century volumes and those from 1901-1929 for the new stacks, and those published between 1930 and 1950 for the 9th floor of the old stacks. This left one whole floor for the more current monographic literature in the newly adopted classification of the National Library of Medicine. The purpose of the new shelving was to permit growth of the collection for 25 years, but such has been the outpouring of the world's presses that within 3 years it was evident that other means of expansion must be provided. Other libraries were facing this same problem, and in 1957 the Library Committee invited several New York medical librarians to discuss the possibility of a cooperative venture. In March 1958 a meeting was held at the Academy of administrators and librarians. As a result, in January 1964, the Medical Library Center of New York came into being with Dr. Craig as the Chairman of the Board. Dr. Craig spared no effort in raising funds for the establishment of this important service. Already the Library has cleared its shelves of 1600 bound volumes and 100,000 foreign theses, and our crowded stacks are once more in reasonable order. The volumes sent to the Center mean no loss to the Academy's research collection, as they are chiefly runs of

journals of pharmacy, nursing, or library science. Also, they and the theses are available on 24 hours' notice for use within the Library through the Center's delivery service, which daily stops at the participating libraries to pick up and deliver volumes going from one collection to another. In 1965, 14,000 volumes were carried.

The current reference collection, which must be easily available for both readers and staff, has far outgrown shelving convenient to the main area of use, a prime requisite for this material. New means of photo reproduction and data processing have brought a flood of important reference tools to shelves that cannot expand to accommodate them. Staff to process and service the collection has increased from 48 to 54 since 1947, with resultant crowding. The area containing the rare book and history of medicine collections became inadequate for both staff and volumes. Three additional small rooms on the mezzanine were requisitioned for staff, archives, and stack shelving. Valuable gifts and purchases of early material added to the many histories, and important reference tools overflowed the limited space, so that weeding was necessary to transfer many to other quarters, especially to the locked stack floor assigned to the department. Filling some of this stack area were boxes of museum materials packed away when the museum was turned to other purposes. The advent of the Medical Library Center temporarily solved this particular problem, for the transfer of foreign theses released a basement room that now houses this interesting collection. Unfortunately, the lack of a display area or a curator to make this a vital instrument in the study of the history of medicine greatly curtails its use and discourages important donations.

COLLECTIONS

The effectiveness of a library cannot be judged solely by the size of its collections, but yearly additions do indicate somewhat the vigor of continuing operations. Despite a policy of regular weeding of inappropriate materials, the Library has developed in 20 years from 252,000 bound volumes and 149,000 pamphlets to 360,000 bound volumes and 165,000 pamphlets. In 1946, 1,652 journals were received regularly and, in 1965, 4,330. This seemingly substantial increase does not reflect in any way a maintenance of the same percentage of the published literature, for the number of journals published throughout the world in the postwar years has proliferated at an alarming rate. More alarming,

however, is the staggering proliferation in subscription costs. Today the Library, vainly endeavoring to stay within its budget, must cautiously consider acquisitions that would have been automatically ordered a decade ago. In 1964, \$13,000 above the budgeted amount was spent and, in 1965, \$7,000. Curtailments have been made, but costs rise more quickly than predicted. Current subscriptions in 1946 came to only \$4,629; in 1965 to \$41,562. Such costs daunt the most generous library supporter. Yet it is especially necessary for a collection to maintain its important current journal subscriptions in an era when data processing has accelerated indexing in depth of an ever-growing number of journals. That the number of our journal subscriptions has not much more than doubled during a period when their cost has climbed tenfold makes the outlook for the future of some concern.

For the scientist the most recent literature is all-important, and efforts must be continued to acquire and process it as rapidly as possible, so that its dissemination may be prompt. Yet the value of a research library depends upon its total resources: current books, journals, indexes, reference tools, and also the literature of the past, ancient and more recent. The Academy Library has been fortunate in its builders, who have understood the need for preserving the material of medical history. Preeminent in understanding its value was the true "father" of the Library, Samuel Smith Purple, whose contributions did not fall within the time period of the last 20 years, but whose influence upon the growth and development of our collections still firmly prevails. Dr. Malloch, too, was a medical historian, and his untiring interest was responsible for the materialization in 1933 of the Rare Book Room that now bears his name.

The year 1946, the first of Dr. Craig's administration, saw also the inauguration of an association of enormous significance in the growth of our collections. Through the efforts of Dr. Alfred M. Hellman and Dr. Frederic D. Zeman, the Friends of the Rare Book Room was established, and it is no coincidence that in the years that followed, not only were gifts of value and importance acquired through the efforts of the Friends, but collections of richness and variety came in unprecedented numbers. These and other gifts purchased or inspired by the Friends have been well described in the little publication, *Academy Bookman*, which twice a year provides information about these exciting acquisitions and about the activities of the members

of the Friends and the staff of the library.

The first president of the Friends was the late Dr. Fenwick Beekman, whose own splendid collection came to us several years later. Undoubtedly, as president of the New York Historical Society in 1948, his influence was felt in the decision by that Society to present to us, jointly with the Brooklyn Museum, the famous Edwin Smith surgical papyrus, one of the earliest texts known relating to medicine. The first issue of the *Academy Bookman* in the spring of 1948 appropriately begins with an article by Dr. Claude E. Heaton, “Samuel Smith Purple, 1822-1900,” an account of one of our greatest benefactors written by another. Dr. Heaton served for 23 years on the Library Committee, and the issues of the *Bookman* list many treasured items from his collection. Many are of New York medical interest, the field in which Dr. Heaton made important contributions. Other names appear frequently as donors in these early issues: Dr. Hellman, whose magnificent copies showed his judgment as a bookman; Dr. Reginald Burbank, who collected books reflecting his own specialty of joint diseases; Mr. Arthur Houghton, generous and knowledgeable benefactor of many libraries; Mr. Lee Ash, editor, bookman and friend of all libraries. These and other individuals added appreciably to the gifts acquired through use of the funds the Friends annually make available to fill gaps on our shelves at a time when the ever more expensive and elusive material becomes available. Our modest budgetary funds would not permit continuing support for our outstanding collection. As readers of book-dealers’ catalogs and auction records know, scientific literature has skyrocketed in price as more and more desirable copies are deposited in libraries with fewer coming again to the market. Our debt to all the members of the Friends is great, to those who have continued their financial support, to those who have served as officers, and to Dr. Hellman and Dr. Zeman who planned this valuable resource. Special mention should be made of Mrs. Hellman’s annual donation in memory of her late husband.

Later issues of the *Bookman*, 1956-1965, show volumes from the Library of Dr. Karl Vogel of more than usual interest. In 1956 our collection of early contributions to naval medicine was greatly enriched by both major and out-of-the way books from his shelves. One of his most exciting and valuable treasures came in 1965, Benvenuto Cellini’s *Autobiography*, first edition, 1728. The astonishing variety of collections

offered to us from 1957 to 1965 have been described in "Embarrassment of Riches," 1965, this *Bulletin*, vol. 41, pp. 1117-24, so they need not be repeated here except to draw attention to their variety: the Neinken collection of public health broadsides, 16th to 19th centuries; the Robert L. Levy library of classics in cardiology; the Hunterian collection of Dr. Beekman with other outstanding texts indicating his wide interests; the Hayes Martin collection of medical prints; more than 200 signed photographs of medical friends of the late Paul B. Hoeber; the fine group of works by Francesco Redi and his scientific contemporaries assembled by Rufus Cole; the Treves bequest of pharmacy jars and silver; the albums containing medical stamps from Dr. Peter Denker. For the prospective museum of the future are promised exquisite manikins, including 22 Chinese doctor dolls, from Jerome P. Webster, and the William Shehadi collection of x-ray tubes. Abner I. Weisman's rich treasures of the pre-Columbian medical sculpture also await such a home.

One collection mentioned as a future donation as early as 1960 has now arrived, the Michael M. Davis library on economic and social aspects of medical care. Anyone studying the movements that led to Medicare must have recourse to this extraordinary material, which includes published and unpublished records of the most important development in health care in the United States.

ARCHIVES

The importance of preserving an institution's own records has been particularly emphasized by industry and government, and today there are archivists trained in methods for caring for such materials. The Academy, stimulated long ago by the wisdom of Dr. Purple, is rich in the documents of its history. In 1957 a half-time position of archivist was authorized, and through the imaginative efforts of Bettina Thrall in that position records and information from all of the Academy's offices have been assembled and analyzed. Housed separately, but in overflowing quarters, the Archives require much more space for appropriate care. Archives of other organizations, particularly of local New York medical societies have come to the Library for safekeeping. Some national organizations have asked for permission to deposit their papers here; in one instance an international association. Such records are of prime historical interest, and in the future, when room is provided, a substantial archival program can be established. Already an

informal group exists, the Medical Archivists of New York, whose purpose is to encourage local medical facilities to ensure the preservations of their records.

PRESERVATION

Concern has long been felt in libraries about the chances of survival of many volumes emanating from the 1860's to the present. Poor paper and the effects of storage in centrally heated rooms have resulted in crumbling leaves. In 1947, when Philip Van Ingen compiled the Academy's history, he had bound, at his own expense, the only known copies of some the Academy's official publications. Ten years later the leaves, pulled from the binding, were ready to crumble to dust on handling. Now, fortunately, treatment by the Barrow method of deacidification and lamination, has restored these same volumes so that they may be used without anxiety. The Library budget each year includes the sum of \$1,000 for rehabilitation by this method, and items are carefully selected.

PUBLICATIONS

By 1947 the History of Medicine series of the Library Publication Committee consisted of seven titles. No. 8, issued in 1949, was Dr. Van Ingen's centennial history of the Academy. In the next 10 years there were 4 additions to the series. Then new arrangements made with the Hafner Publishing Company of this city proved stimulating and fruitful. From the publication of the handsome 3-volume English edition of Morgagni, through 11 paperback facsimiles of classics and several hard-cover volumes, the series has now reached No. 29, with others in preparation. No. 27 is of particular interest, as it brings together the contributions by Fielding H. Garrison, originally published regularly in the Academy *Bulletin*, 1925-1935.

The *Academy Bookman*, previously mentioned, was brought into being through the interest of Frederic D. Zeman, who served as editor for its first decade. In 1956 a small brochure, *Your Library, What Every Fellow Should Know*, was compiled to ensure that Fellows are aware of their library privileges. A copy goes to each new Fellow.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Library literature has many articles discussing the function and

value of a library committee. Many are doubtful if such a committee is advantageous. In the minds of those who have been Librarians of the Academy there has been no such question. The minutes of this Committee over the years show informed and interested support of the Librarian in coping with the needs and problems of this ever expanding and costly department of the Academy. When Dr. Craig became Director of the Academy he had been on the Library Committee for several years and had been its chairman from 1942 to 1946. Claude Heaton was his successor, 1947-1950, and was followed by Samuel W. Lambert, Jr., 1951-1957, William C. White, 1958-1961, and Bronson S. Ray, 1962 to the present time. The Library has benefitted greatly from their guidance and the Librarians have had wholehearted appreciation of their continuing interest and active support. The Book Selection Subcommittee under Saul Jarcho's chairmanship is called upon often for judgment, especially in areas peripheral to medicine in this period of interdisciplinary orientation. Dr. Jarcho's 20 years on the committee and his readiness to respond to cries for assistance, have led to frequent dependence upon his knowledgeable advice. The Subcommittee on Administration has been long chaired by the Library's good friend, Samuel W. Lambert, Jr., who has patiently and vocally supported the Librarian's annual burden of the budget. The House Subcommittee, whose chairman is Hilton H. Stothers, is seldom called upon, but any building plans for the future will be under its guidance. A new subcommittee has the role of advising on matters relating to new mechanical aids and will be increasingly consulted. Edgar Bick, a former president of the Friends of Rare Book Room, is its chairman.

TECHNICAL PROGRESS

Perhaps the most satisfying progress is the elimination of backlogs. In each department discouraging piles of work waiting for attention clogged offices and shelves and threatened to overwhelm the staff. Extra help at times, and heroic action by the staff cleared the basement and made it a usable area. Extra funds and help brought up to date acquisitions files far too cumbersome for efficient management, and a reorganization of procedures was introduced to speed the receipt of current materials. A cataloger was added to the staff for the sole purpose of processing an accumulated backlog of thousands of volumes coming in various donations. Unbelievably, hundreds of bound pamphlet volumes

from the New York Public Library piled on floors, tables, and shelves, gradually disappeared and were properly cared for by the new cataloger, Mrs. Helen Bayne Cherami, who went on to complete the cataloging of Dr. Beekman's Hunterian collection and to attack the mounting arrears of miscellaneous historical papers in the Rare Book Department.

To avoid the arduous typing of catalog cards and the necessary proofreading, an IBM system was installed capable of being adapted later to other functions. Its first use has been limited to typing cards and the monthly accessions list. Among new photocopying equipment acquired to answer the needs of our clientele is a new microfilm camera and a Polaroid camera that can supply color prints and transparencies as well as black and white photographs. A reader-printer makes it possible to get copy from small portions of films. The 914 Xerox gets the most constant usage and, hopefully, in the future the large and expensive Copyflo machine will be obtained to enable us to provide full-size copy from microfilms, easing the heavy use of Xerox.

TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Large budgetary increases for libraries in the past 20 years seldom represent realistic figures for development. Instead, no matter how generous, they are often a disappointing minimum necessary to cover expenses for another year without hope of expansion or maintenance on a desired level. If the Academy Library is to maintain its position as a resource collection, additional funds will be required. Government funds through the Medical Library Assistance Act should offer some assistance, but the needs are great and we must look to other sources for financial help. Acquisitions and staff needs predominate, and proper quarters to house both for effective service. The high cost of data processing must be considered. Prompt dissemination of information is a library's first responsibility, and should funds be supplied for free photocopying in lieu of interlibrary loans, the deluge will be immediate. A study under the direction of the Academy and funded by the Health Research Council of New York resulted in a provocative analysis, *Interlibrary Request and Loan Transactions among Medical Libraries of the Greater New York Area*, by Lee Ash and Vernon Bruette, New York, 1966. The heavy use of the Academy's collections reported here would have been very much greater were it not for our lending

restrictions and high charges for photocopy. Expansion of this important service is impossible without similar expansion of staff and facilities. Obviously, for acquisitions, processing, and dissemination, a well-trained staff and efficient housing are essential.

These 20 years have seen vast changes in library practices and administration, and the Academy Library must adapt to them, so that the great collections brought together here during the past century will continue to attract the support needed for both maintenance and progress. Our "greatest material heritage" must have sustenance, as the next 20 years will show.

